How to Decide Whether to Sell Inherited Jewellery

Getting started with inherited jewellery

When you inherit jewellery, the first instinct is often to keep it for sentimental reasons. But you may also wonder whether it makes sense to sell it. The decision can feel complicated because the pieces carry memories, and you may not know their actual market value. Taking a calm, step-by-step approach helps you separate emotion from practicality and arrive at a choice that feels right for your situation.

Step one: Understand what you have

Before you can decide whether to sell, you need a clear picture of what you own. Start by sorting the jewellery into groups: rings, necklaces, bracelets, earrings, and watches. Note any markings you see. Look for hallmarks, small stamps inside rings or on clasps, that indicate metal type and purity. For example, 750 means 18-karat gold, while 585 means 14-karat. Platinum is often marked 950 or "PLAT." Silver pieces may show 925.

Also check for maker's marks or signatures on the back of brooches or inside bands. These can tell you the designer or manufacturer, which sometimes adds value. If you find a name like Cartier, Tiffany, or Van Cleef & Arpels, that piece may be worth more than its weight in gold or gemstones alone.

Step two: Assess the gemstones and craftsmanship

Gemstones have their own value factors. Look at the colour, clarity, cut, and carat weight of any diamonds or coloured stones. A small diamond with high colour and clarity can be worth more than a larger stone with visible flaws. Coloured gemstones like sapphires, rubies, and emeralds are harder to judge by eye, but you can note whether they appear vibrant and free of major cracks.

Craftsmanship matters too. Handmade pieces with intricate detail, fine settings, and good finishing generally hold more value than machine-made costume jewellery. A well-made vintage ring with delicate filigree work may appeal to collectors. Condition is also key: chipped stones, bent prongs, or broken clasps reduce what a buyer will pay, though some damage can be repaired before sale.

Step three: Decide on an appraisal

Once you have a rough idea of what you have, get a professional valuation. A formal appraisal from a qualified gemologist or jewellery expert gives you an independent estimate of market

value. This is not the same as the price you would receive from a buyer, appraisals often reflect retail replacement value, which is higher than what a dealer will pay, but it gives you a baseline for negotiations.

When choosing an appraiser, look for someone with recognised credentials, such as membership in a professional gemological institute. Ask how they charge; many appraisers work for a flat fee or an hourly rate, not a percentage of the value, which avoids a conflict of interest. A good appraisal report will describe each piece, note its hallmarks, and assign a value range.

Step four: Decide whether to sell now or later

Timing matters in the jewellery market, though it is less volatile than precious metals or stocks. If you need cash soon, selling sooner makes sense. If you can wait, you have more room to shop around for the best offer. Some gemstones and antique pieces gain value over time, especially if they are rare or from a sought-after period, like Art Deco or Victorian jewellery.

But holding onto pieces also carries risks, theft, loss, or damage, and requires insurance or a safe deposit box. If you do not wear the jewellery and it sits in a drawer, you are not enjoying it, and its condition may slowly deteriorate. Weigh the emotional attachment against the practical cost of storage and security.

Step five: Choose the right buyer

Not all buyers are the same. Some specialise in gold and silver, paying based on metal weight and purity. Others focus on gemstones or designer pieces and will offer more for the style and brand. A local specialist like Anthony Alan can evaluate your pieces and give you a clear breakdown of what each component is worth. This kind of transparent assessment helps you see exactly where the value lies, in the metal, the stones, or the craftsmanship.

When you meet a buyer, bring any original documentation you have, such as certificates of authenticity, receipts, or the appraisal report. Ask how they determine their offer. Reputable buyers will explain their process and let you watch the weighing and testing. They should also offer a secure payment method, such as a bank transfer or certified cheque, and respect your privacy throughout the transaction.

Step six: Compare offers and trust your gut

It is wise to get more than one quote. A second opinion can reveal whether the first offer is fair or low. Do not feel pressured to accept on the spot. Take the quotes home, compare them, and consider the reputation of each buyer. Look for reviews or ask around in your community. A

buyer who takes time to explain their reasoning and answer your questions is more likely to be trustworthy than one who rushes you.

Also think about what matters to you beyond price. Do you want the jewellery to go to someone who will appreciate it, or are you purely interested in the cash? Some buyers resell to collectors, while others melt down gold for scrap. If your piece has historical or artistic value, you may prefer a buyer who will preserve and sell it as a whole.

Step seven: Handle the sale with care

Once you decide to sell, complete the transaction in a way that feels safe. Meet the buyer in a professional setting, such as their office or showroom. Count the payment before handing over the jewellery. Get a receipt that describes each item and the amount paid. Keep a copy for your records, especially if the sale has tax implications later.

If you are selling multiple pieces, consider whether to sell them as a set or individually. A matched set of earrings and a necklace may fetch more together because it appeals to a collector, but selling separately could get you a better total if one piece is far more valuable than the others. Ask the buyer for their opinion on this, but make your own decision based on your research.

Step eight: Reflect on your decision

After the sale, take a moment to acknowledge that you made a thoughtful choice. Selling inherited jewellery is not a simple transaction, it involves family history, personal taste, and financial reality. Whether you sold everything, kept a few special pieces, or decided not to sell at all, you followed a process that respected both the items and your own needs. That is the best outcome you can hope for.

For anyone in Cape Town weighing this decision, working with a knowledgeable local buyer can make the process smoother. A firm like Anthony Alan offers evaluations that help you understand what you have, so you can sell with confidence. The key is to take your time, gather information, and choose a path that feels right for you.